

TEMPLE OF MYSTICISM

Edited by : BANKEY BEHARI

TALES FROM
THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

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(PUBLISHED AND IN PREPARATION)

The Story of Mira Bai.

Tales from the Mystics of the East.

Mysticism in Islam.

Mysticism in the Upanishads.

Selections from the Bhaktmal

Selections from Bharthari.

Selections from the Yogvasishta.

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Songs and Sayings of the Mystics of the East.

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Selections from the Persian Mystic Poets (in Hindi).

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Tales from the Mystics of the East

BY

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FOREWORD

O burn that burns to heal!
O more thou pleasan' wound!

--*St. John of Cross.*

Mysticism is a course of thinking, that has for its objective the achievement of *rest* for the soul. While God has inspired many of His devotees with awe, the mystic claims to have wooed Him through love. This he claims to have achieved by performance of practices, both internal and external, in proper surroundings under the guidance of a Teacher. The body and the soul, purified by the spiritual bath, become fitted to enjoy the rapturous embrace of the Divine Bridegroom. The mystic claims to have attained this union with the Lord. He has seen Him, and has felt His touch 'that is like the passionate lover's resting on the heaving bosom of his beloved.'

Mysticism, 'the romance of religion,' is not the monopoly of any creed or the rich acquisition of

any particular period. It is a natural consequence of the soul craving for peace, while ruthlessly swept 'without pause along the great curve of birth and death.' Conscious of his divinity, man refuses for long to continue in this prison-house of a body, awaiting to be set free by the divine Mother-Death. This divine discontent is in the air. Shelley caught it:

"The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar,
From the sphere of our sorrow."

This quest after eternity, this why and whither of mankind, has for ages turned princes into beggars and the wise into mendicants.

Mysticism, although describing a full itinerary of the stages in the PATH that leads to the Goal, warns the seeker against getting engrossed in the glories of the miracles, and the cobwebs of the Picture-gallery. By the help of the divine insight, called intuition, that transcends all reason and

Science, it offers to the mystic, the solution of the eternal riddle.

By service of humanity, which it proclaims is worship, it says that enlightenment can come equally in the cloister and the market-place.

Mysticism common to all nationalities, as much found amongst the Greeks, as amongst the Romanists, the Sufis and the Vedantists, offers to set at rest the religious wrangles that dwarf our vision, and lead to such heart-burning. Alack: we stick to forms, we ignore the spirit and the essentials of religion. Our quarrel is with the conch that the Hindu sounds, with the pulpit on which the Christian delivers his sermons, with the mosque where the Muhammadan offers his prayers. Look within, cries the mystic, and say thy prayers in the Temple of the Heart, before the Deity that knows no sex and belongs to no creed—that is thine own Self.

Once the viewpoint of the mystic is understood, it becomes a happy pilgrimage for the sojourning

soul in this strange land. By his catholicity the mystic offers a fair haven to even the dissenter, much more to the confessor. He only insists on the purity of the heart of the seeker and the zest in his search. With the hymn on his lips, with faith in his heart, the mystic urges the seeker, to proceed on fearlessly, with hope chanting the prayer, with the Vedantist:

“Lead me from the unreal to the real;
Lead me from darkness to light;
Lead me from death to immortality.”

The goal is then reached. For the promise of the Lord is fair and we have not to lose sight of it:

“Merge thy mind in Me, be My devotee,
prostrate thyself before Me, thou shalt come
even unto Me. I pledge thee My troth, thou art
dear to Me. Abandoning all the *dharmas*, come
unto Me, alone for shelter, sorrow not, I will
liberate thee from all sins.”

The mystic is no day-dreamer, but a realist, arriving at his conclusions by actual experiences. And

once these revelations dawn, he in his quaint way describes them, which are otherwise incapable of expression, by simple sayings and anecdotes, each replete with great meaning and profound truth.

Here is a mild bouquet, prepared from those crushed petals that have fallen from the effulgent lotus—the heart of the mystic—in the various lands. Unaffected with the passage of time, they still retain some of their fragrance.

These illustrate some of the great mystic truths, and though the originals are impaired by the translations (for majority of the stories are translations from the Original Persian and the Vernaculars of Hindustan), yet the author hopes they shall serve their purpose of introducing the reader into the religion of the mystic and arouse his interest in the study of mysticism.

P.

PHAPHAMAU CASTLE.

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CONTENTS

		Page
Foreword	i	
Death—Where is thy Sting ?	1	
One Heart, therefore one Love	3	
Guru Nanak and the Boy Budha	5	
Mira Converts the Russian	7	
Hasan Basri Chastised	9	
Ibrahim Adam turned an Anchorite	11	
The Priest and the Untouchable	14	
Raja Janak, the Teacher	16	
The Sphinx	20	
Ask the World of the Worldly	22	
Love God for His Sake	24	
Love without the Tear !	26	
I have purchased a garden in Eden	27	

	Page
Bahlol, the Wise	29
Set fire to Paradise	31
I tolerate Thee alone	33
The Disciple Excelled the Teacher	35
Develop Faith	38
Martyr at the Altar of Love	40
The Example set by Kabir	49
Moses meets the Friend of God	52
Ask not the Boon of Love	55
Mira Instructs Goswami	59
Guru Nanak at Mecca	61
Rabia and the Youth	63
Jaideva and the Gita Govind	65
Mother I offer thee bewitching eyes	68
Pursuing the Smouldering Bones	71
I am burnt : I am consumed—cried Rabia	74
My mother blessed me	76
Who is a true lover	78
Stone the Heretic	81

	Page
Down with the mound of Ego	84
Seek Refuge in Him	87
Sadan, the Butcher Saint	90
Kabir's Repartee	94
Fariduddin ATTAR turns a Sufi	95
The wife as the Teacher	97
Serve thy Master with thy Eyes	99
O my Lord, O my Sweet Lamb	104
Kamal Heals the Leper	106
Heretic or the Believer	108
Spirituality once achieved, never lost	110
The Despised Skull	114
The Memorable meeting	117
Ye Knoweth my heart	120
The Kiss of the Candle	124
The Sufi who never took meat	126
He does not accept Bribe	128
Where Dwells the Lord ?	129
Shamsh Tabraiz raising the Dead	130

DEATH—WHERE IS THY STING?

A WOMAN once approached the Enlightened One—Buddha—with her dead child in her laps; and prayed to him to revive it. Buddha told her, “Bring some mustard seed from that house in the village in which no death has ever taken place; and I promise I shall bring back life to the child once again.”

The lady visited many places, but to her utter dismay found no home in which

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

death had "not taken its toll at one time or other. The inevitability of death dawned on the lady. Satisfied with her new revelation she stopped her lamentations, and laying the child on the ground thus addressed it:—

"O light of my eyes, I thought this experience was peculiar to me. I find, however, death is nothing new, and none is exempt from it. It is common to all things created. Lamentation is futile. Death, where is thy sting? Mutability is writ large on everything in the Universe. I shall, henceforth seek Him, who knows no death."

ONE HEART, THEREFORE ONE LOVE

HAZRAT Imam Hasan was only twelve years of age. He asked Hazrat Ali Murtaza one day, whom did he love? Murtaza replied, " You, Hasan."

Hasan: Do you love brother Husain also?

Murtaza: Yes, him too.

Hasan: And do you love mother too?

Murtaza: Yes.

Hasan: Then, do you love granduncle also?

Murtaza: Yes.

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

Hasan: Have you any affection for God?

Murtaza: Yes.

Surprised at the answer, Imam Hasan observed, "Father, is it a heart that you possess or a traveller's home that shelters so many affections. The heart is one and it can accommodate only one. Either fill the heart with love of God, or cherish another affection. You cannot have two in one.

GURU NANAK AND THE BOY BUDHA

NANAK initiated amongst his followers the practice of singing devotional hymns in the early hours of the morning. He noticed that a child always came and stood behind him, while he sat in devotion. The Guru once asked him the reason for it. He said to the child, "Child, it is time for you to sleep and an age to be passed in merriment. What is it that brings you here?" The child replied, "My mother once asked

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

me to supply fuel to the fire. I witnessed the younger and feebler splinters burnt away and disappeared earlier than the thicker and older ones. Since then I fear death. It might come earlier to me than those who are my elders. This doubt keeps me seek your company.”

The Guru was delighted and thenceforward the child was called Bhai Budha (wise brother) and was given the unique honour of crowning the Gurus in the Sikh community.

MIRA CONVERTS THE RUFFIAN

MIRA BAI, the devotee, was well known for her surrender to her Lord Girdhar. Never did she deny anything asked for in His name. A dissolute ruffian once tried to test her virtues; and going to Mira, said that he had orders from her Lord Girdhar to please himself with Mira. Mira readily consented; dressed herself beautifully and arranged the bed. She then summoned the impudent fellow and thus addressed him,

“ Now everything is ready. Come, enjoy. I am ready to carry out the wishes of my Lord. Call the saints who dwell in my company that they might also appreciate the sight, how the Lord of Mira enjoys her through thee.” The ruffian said, “ Does anybody do such things in public? ”

Mira replied, “ He seeth all our acts, good or bad. Why feareth thou the fulfilment of His wishes? There is no shame in carrying out His will and no fear in following His mandates. Why fear publicity then? ”

The ruffian felt ashamed, sought Mira’s pardon and spent his later life in devotion and piety at the feet of the Devoted Mother.

H A S A N B A S R I C H A S T I S E D

HASAN of Basra was recognised to be a great Sufi of his time. He was a contemporary of Rabia. One day he assembled the Dervishes about a tank and requested them to display their miraculous power. Some walked on the water, while others flew in the air. Hasan himself flew in the air to display his achievement.

Rabia, passing that way was drawn to this assemblage: smiled at this foolish display of

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

misguided, vain and arrogant mystics; and she rebuked Hasan for his frivolity, "Love of God does not consist in such idle shows." Throwing her shoe in the air, which hung there, she said, "How do you connect this to devotion for God? You spend a lifetime to learn that which a bird can do, and waste a lifetime in saving the ferryman's charges. Do not boast. This is not devotion. Delight not in such idle things. Go, learn love of God. Be humble. Weep day and night that He might have mercy on you and wash away your sins. Give up arrogance and crave for the beatific vision. Miracles are not devotion."

IBRAHIM ADAM TURNED AN ANCHORITE

BEFORE Ibrahim Adam became a dervish, he was a king, who ruled his subjects very justly. Once he was lying in his regal couch in his palace, when about midnight he heard heavy thumps on the roof. He came out of his bed and tried to find out the cause of this disturbance. To his surprise he saw men like angels on the roof. He inquired of them, the cause of their presence. They replied that they were searching for their

camels. Said the king, "How foolish you appear to be! How can you expect to find your camels on the roof of the palace?"

"Just as you can hope to find God, donning the crown and regal robe, and passing your life in this palace," replied these new beings.

The reproach went home to the heart of the king. He gave up the world and followed by his wife and child he began passing his days in meditation and contemplation in a solitary cell. The father-in-law of Adam took up the reins of Government on behalf of the child of Adam, whom he brought back with him from the latter. As the child came of age, he insisted on visiting his father and was taken to him. Ibrahim was much drawn

IBRAHIM ADAM TURNED AN ANCHORITE

towards the child and instead of contemplation Adam began passing much of his time in conversation with this boy.

As Ibrahim lay in bed, in his dream, he saw the Lord say to him, "Adam, you cannot love two at a time. Make your choice. Either devote yourself to your son or else cherish Our love." Ibrahim realised his frailty, sought the forgiveness of the Lord and prayed, "Lord, relieve me of my new passion. In this little house (the heart) none can live except Thee." Shortly, the child expired. Adam passed his life in contemplation, as of yore, devoted to his Lord and to none of the things of the world.

THE PRIEST AND THE UNTOUCHABLE

ONCE an untouchable sought entrance into a temple. The priest, however, refused it. In answer to the poor man's entreaties, the holy man replied, " You are impure by birth, first undergo penance for two years, and then come into my presence, then I shall consider your request." The untouchable returned home crest-fallen and sad, to do the holy man's bidding.

As chance would have it, this very priest saw

the untouchable some three years later passing by his temple quite unconcerned. The priest stopped him and inquired, "Hello, how is it that you did not come to my temple? Have you not yet performed the austerities? It is over two years now." The poor devotee replied, "Yes, I carried out your orders and I thank you for your instructions. For, in fact the Lord blessed me with His vision, and warned me against entering your temple, for said He, He had not Himself visited it for ages."

The vanity of the priest was crushed, his pride was humbled. God sees the heart, to Him appearances are immaterial.

R A J A J A N A K, T H E T E A C H E R

ONE day Sukhdeoiji, requested his father to instruct him in the final stages of devotion and lead him to the home of Bliss and Salvation. His father told him to go to Raja Janak who was the best person to help him. Although surprised at it, the son went to Raja Janak. The king kept him waiting for seven days at one of the gates and then for another seven days at the other. On the fifteenth day, Sukhdeoiji was allowed the

R A J A J A N A K, T H E T E A C H E R

audience to the king. He was shocked at the grandeur and the luxury in which the king dwelt. The thought flashed in his mind, how could this king steeped in worldly entanglements instruct and enlighten him. The king read Sukhdeoiji's mind. But, however, remained silent over it, entertained Sukhdeoiji and ordered his servants to have festivities throughout the city to mark the arrival of Sukhdeoiji.

When the arrangements were complete and the city was observing a gala-day, the king asked Sukhdeoiji to go and watch these shows, however, with a cup full of milk in his hands. The soldiers who were to accompany Sukhdeoiji were definitely instructed to take him through every part of the city and he was

to miss the sight of gaiety at none of the places. They were, however, warned not to hesitate in chopping off Sukhdeoiji's head, the instant any drop of milk was spilt from the cup.

Sukhdeoiji accompanied by these soldiers went round the city and returned late to the king. The king was pleased at his safe return. Next he questioned him, how did he enjoy the decorations; and did he find any fault anywhere.

Sukhdeoiji replied, "O king, I saw nothing. All my thoughts were centred on this cup, lest a drop be spilt and I lose my life."

Janak replied, "Sukhdeoiji, this is how I am living in the midst of these gaieties." Imagine the cup to be death, mind as milk therein,

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

and these festivities are mere ephemeral splendours of the world. I engage myself in this world with caution that the milk (mind) is not spilt (disturbed) and all attention is riveted on Him. For a moment's deviation from His thoughts is death for me."

Sukhdeoiji took his instructions from the Raja and returned happy.

T H E S P H I N X

IT is narrated of Shibli that on one occasion, after performing his ablutions, he was proceeding to the mosque to say his prayers. He heard the Hidden Voice say, "Again these ablutions and dare you proceed to our House!" Shibli retraced his steps, when he again heard the voice say, "Does it behove you to return from our Presence like this? Where else can you go where we are not?" In sheer helplessness, Shibli scream-

THE SPHINX

ed. The voice was heard, “Dare you question our authority!” Perplexed, Shibli stood quietly, and the voice interrupted the silence saying, “ Better to burn in our love, than to stand thus self-complacent.”

Shibli desperate, cried out, “ Then the complaint is also addressed to Thee.”

ASK THE WORLD OF THE WORLDLY

ONCE in need, Shibli approached a worldly and requested him to give him a particular article. The latter refused the request and observed, "Why do you not ask for it from Him from Whom you ask for a happy end and a glorious next life?"

Shibli replied, "My request is for a thing of this world. This world is mean and so you are, worldlies. As against it, He is respectable, and so is the next world respect-

ASK THE WORLD OF THE WORLDLY

able. From the mean I ask for the mean object, and from the Respected One, the object that is adored.”

L O V E G O D F O R H I S S A K E

“**O** GOD,” once Shibli prayed, “the world remembers you for Thy blessings: I love you for the troubles which Thou hast bestowed on the world.”

He is said to have prayed, “O God, bestow on me the two worlds—this and the next—so that I may prepare a morsel of it, and give it to the heretic to swallow it. These are the two veils that act as obstacles in having the divine vision. When these veils

shall be removed, the devotee shall love Thee for Thy sake and reach his goal. People will, then, for ever cease to crave for happiness in this world or the next, and shall only crave for Thy love.”

LOVE WITHOUT THE TEAR!

ONE day Shibli noticed a block of wood was slowly burning. Being slightly wet, it was oozing out a viscid liquid at its other end. Shibli drew the attention of his disciples to it and said to them pointedly: "Ye professionals in the Path of Love, how do you say that you are burning in the Love of separation, when I do not see any tears in your eyes? Take lesson from this piece of wood, how it burns and how it weeps."

I HAVE PURCHASED A GARDEN IN EDEN

ALLAMA Abdul Salam was noted for serving the dervishes with all he had. It is related of him that on one occasion, there occurred a great famine in Damascus, where he was staying at the time. His wife came to him, gave him some of her ornaments she had on her body and told him to go and purchase a garden-house as they were selling so cheap due to days of scarcity. She added that they will then be

able to avoid the heat of the summer and pass their days happily.

Abdul Salam took the ornaments, sold them in the market-place and distributed the price thus received amongst the starving and the famished, and came back home, full of joy. The wife asked her husband if he had purchased the garden. "Yes," he replied, "I have purchased one in the Gardens of Eden. I saw the people in misery and I distributed the proceeds amongst the poor."

B A H L O L. T H E W I S E

SHIBLI was very fond of reciting an incident from the life of Bahlol:

“One day I saw Bahlol, the devotee, riding a stick, like the children and proceeding to Jabna. I asked him, ‘ Bahlol, where are you going to?’ He replied, ‘ I am going to meet God’ and proceeded on his journey.”

“In the evening I saw him returning, his eyes red with weeping, and his wooden horse broken at the middle. I asked him,

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

‘ Bahlol, would you tell me what transpired at the meeting, you look so sad?’ He replied, ‘ When I reached His august presence, I was conscious that my name would be recorded amongst those who loved Him. But to my surprise, He turned me out, the moment He recognized me.’

SET FIRE TO PARADISE

•

OF Rabia Basri it is narrated that once she was weeping and saying:

“Set fire to Paradise and pour water on Hell-fire so that people may pray to God for the sake of His love, and not in hope of reward or fear of punishment.”

A similar feeling seems to have overpowered Abu Bakr Shibli who one day suddenly got up from his devotion, and with a live coal in his hand, proceeded towards Kaaba.

People asked him what he was after. Shibli replied, "I am going to Kaaba, to burn it to ashes, so that people might renounce that House and centre their attention on the Master of the House."

Next day, Shibli was again seen, intoxicated with devotion, carrying a burning piece of wood lighted on either side. People inquired of him where was he bound to. Shibli answered, "I am going to put on fire both Heaven and Hell, so that the hope of one or the fear of the other might not keep the attention of the people engaged upon them, and they should love God for His own sake."

I TOLERATE THEE ALONE

ONCE Shibli sat in prayers. The moment the passage from the Quran was recited,—" There is no God but Allah: and Muhammad is His Prophet"—he cried out. " Had not Thou Thyself required Thy name to be associated with that of a stranger, I would have never done so."

This shows Shibli's absorption in Divine consciousness.

On another occasion, Shibli went to Kaaba

~~Chapman~~

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

and stood before the Holy Stone. He said, "I know thou art a mere stone. Had not the Prophet kissed you himself, I would not have shown the respect to you."

THE DISCIPLE EXCELLED THE TEACHER

JUNAID was the teacher of Shibli, but sometimes the disciple surpassed the Master in his apt sayings and experiences. Once Shibli got into a mosque and said, "I say and I hear. None exists in both the worlds except me. Truth speaks this and Truth hears it. Shibli does not come in between." Junaid heard it and said, "Shibli say this by all means, but beware you do not say that before everybody."

A little later Junaid in the course of his discourse said, "Whosoever sought, found Him." Shibli, interrupting suggested an improvement, "Whosoever found Him, started in search of Him."

On another occasion, Junaid said, "The Truth is Junaid, and he alone existed." Shibli intervening said, "Not so. It is heresy. Say that Junaid had no existence separate of the Lord. He alone existed."

Shibli is never reported to have used the expression of his class-mate Mansur Al-Hallaj, "I am Truth," yet he does not appear to have disapproved of it. When his opinion was sought on the indictment of Mansur, he remarked, "Mansur ought not

THE DISCIPLE EXCELLED THE TEACHER

to have disclosed the secret. If one says it, let him be stopped." As Mansur was being gibbeted, Shibli is said to have stood near him and remarked, "We had not asked you to proclaim It to the world." The Kazi who had condemned Mansur overheard it and remarked, "He (Hallaj) is charged for calling himself a Prophet, but, you, Shibli, are asserting Godhood."

D E V E L O P F A I T H

TAHIR BIN Ahmad Bin Bab Misr was noted for his faith, piety and contentment. Before he turned a dervish, he held a high post in the Government of the time. It so happened one day, that while he was on his dining table, a cat approached him repeatedly. Again and again Tahir would throw crumbs to her, she would take them to some room and reappear shortly after. In sheer curiosity Tahir followed the cat, and

DEVELOP FAITH

was surprised to find a blind cat lying in a corner who was being fed by this cat.

Tahir realised that God took care of our body. The fault was our own inasmuch as we lacked faith and feared that if we would not provide for ourselves, who will do it. Here was a blind cat, who was fed by the Creator.

He left his appointment and passed the rest of his days in contemplation and devotion.

MARTYR AT THE ALTAR OF LOVE

WHILE on his way to Mecca, the caravan of pilgrims accompanying Shibli halted at Baghdad. There, in the evening he was surprised to find in the company of his friends, a beautiful youngman artistically dressed, putting on a nice head-dress and a fine pair of shoes embroidered with gold. In his hands the youngman held an apple, which he times and often smelt. So captivating were the ways of the youngman that

Shibli approached him and soon a conversation started between the two :

Shibli : Where are you bound to, youngman ?

Youngman : To my Home.

Shibli : Which Home ?

Youngman : The same Home which has turned you and the whole world mad, and is drawing from ages people to it, on the pretext of a pilgrimage. I am also going to meet the Master of the House, these people are visiting. I want to know Him who lives in that House and what benefit does He shower, that His House has become the goal of so many lives.

Shibli : But the journey is hard, and I do not see any luggage with you. Perhaps you seem to be ignorant of the hardships on the way.

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

Youngmate: (recited the following couplet in reply.)

“ The Beloved desires us to be wanderers in His search.

“ He therefore finds pretexts of pilgrimage for us.”

Shibli: Poetry will not avail you. Be practical. Philosophy and art will not help you in the hard toils of the journey, and will not supply you with food and comforts for the body.

Youngman: You are mistaken. I am not proceeding there out of my choice. With His perfume He is drawing me towards Himself and willingly I am allowing myself to be dragged away. I too have known the life of comfort and up till now lived in luxury.

MARTYR AT THE ALTAR OF LOVE

Shibli: After all, why do you smell this apple from time to time?

Youngman: In order to avoid the hot winds of the desert. Nourished as I have been on dainties, and brought up in the midst of perfumes and nursed on gay bosoms, I have grown addicted to the life of joy and gaiety.

Shibli: I like you very much. Do not mind it. Please accompany me and share the comforts that I am enjoying. Let us be friends on this journey.

Youngman: By God, I say, I cannot accept your offer. It is impossible. You are a dervish. I am a toper. You are a devotee. I am a drunkard. Only the other day I tasted wine. It still possesses me. Why should I pollute your company?

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

Shibli parted company and continued on his journey.

One hot summer morning, while Shibli was passing the holy mosque at Mecca, he was surprised to find the boy whom he met at Baghdad, now grown pale and emaciated, lying in tatters in the drain that issued from Kaaba. Neither the beautiful head-dress was there nor the beautiful shoes. The apple was still held in the hands and he was still smelling it at times. Shibli heard him reciting the lines :

“ The serpent of love has bit my heart.
There is no one to heal me: neither the melody develops, nor is it cured.”

Shibli tried to avoid him, so piteous was the condition of the youngman. The sufferer,

MARTYR AT THE ALTAR OF LOVE

however, called him out. Shibli ~~came~~ near.

Youngman: Do you not recognise me Shibli?

Shibli: Of course, I do. May I ask you what has brought about this tragedy?

Youngman: The Lord will bear me out. It is the state to which you are brought as beloveds, and once you are in, you are converted into lovers.

Shibli: Is this the same apple I saw with you at Baghdad?

Youngman: Yes. This apple is also a witness to what has happened. Don't you see, Shibli, what He has done to me and how I have been maltreated? First He persuaded me, saying, "You are Our beloved, do not lose heart. When I fell a victim to His snares, and crossed the threshold of Love,

I was told I was a lover. When I entered the Path that led to His presence, I was told I was a mere child. When I approached closer, I was told I was too young. When I reached Him, I was told I could not be the knower of the mystery. Perplexed and disheartened I raised a cry, "I claim the fulfilment of my desires." Came the retort, "Get away, you vain fellow, shrouded in veils."

I was burnt to ashes. I found in this Home there was nothing, and in this Home was no stranger dwelling.

Today I am at a loss to know if I am a lover or the loved one; if I am the seeker or the sought; if I am the pilgrim or the adored one. I am pining in this anxiety. It is not

MARTYR AT THE ALTAR OF LOVE

the bodily pain, but the anxiety to solve this riddle that is causing me so much agony. Shibli was touched at the sad plight of the youngman, and offered to take him to the company of the saints, who will lead him out of the Valley of Bewilderment. The youngman refused.

Shibli left him there. On the following morning, Shibli was drawn again to the spot where the youngman lay. A crowd had assembled there. Shibli found the boy was dead. Of a by-stander, who seemed to be acquainted with the affair, Shibli inquired the cause of his death. The latter recited the following lines, in reply:

“ The lovers are the martyrs, (killed) at the hands of the Beloved.

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

How happily they die, with no cry on their lips, no sign of agony on their body."

THE EXAMPLE SET BY KABIR

KABIR spent all his earnings in the service of the dervishes. Therefore, he had seldom any thing to spare. Once, it so happened that a company of holy men visited him at a time when he had not a penny to spend on them. However he requested them to stay. Coming to his wife, he told her the cause of his anxiety and required her to find means to entertain them. The beautiful and devoted wife of Kabir

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

replied, “In the vicinity dwells a shopkeeper, who is charmed by my looks. Should you permit it, I would go and request him to give us some articles of food on credit.” Kabir allowed her to try the game. She went to the shopkeeper, who readily consented to allow her credit, provided she would come to him in the night. She took the articles and returned home and treated the guests very sumptuously.

When the appointed hour of night came, Kabir reminded his wife of her promise to the shopkeeper; and required her to get ready to redeem it. He clad her in clean garments, and taking her on his back went to the residence of the shopkeeper, careless of the rain and the inclement weather. The

THE EXAMPLE SET BY KABIR

shopkeeper was delighted to see the lady, but wondered that her shoes, in spite of the rain, had no mud on them and neither were they wet. He asked her the reason for it. She replied, "There was nothing to wonder at, as her husband, Kabir, had brought her on his back, and was waiting outside."

On hearing the name of Saint Kabir, he felt ashamed and apologised to both, who graciously pardoned him. The latter turned a devoted disciple of Kabir.

MOSES MEETS THE FRIEND OF GOD

4

MOSES once went to Mount Sinai and prayed to the Lord to introduce him to His friend on the earth. Came the reply, he himself was one such. Not satisfied he repeated the request. He was thereupon directed to go to a mountain where His choicest friend dwelt. As Moses reached the place, he experienced a very bad odour coming from that side. On reaching closer he found a man, covered with sores, smelling

MOSES MEETS THE FRIEND OF GOD

awfully, standing in front of him. * In sheer disgust Moses was retracing his steps when the man called him out, " Moses you came to me in such zest but you are returning in such disgust." Moses recognised that he was the man who was the object of his visit. He realised his mistake, went back to him and inquired, how was it that the Lord was thus tormenting His lover. The man answered, " The condition of the lover is always like it; and in it He revels." Moses questioned him, if he could be of any service to him. The man said his first desire to meet him was satisfied, he now wanted a little cold water. Moses went to fetch it, but was amazed to find on his return, that the man lay dead.

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

Moses prayed to the Lord to explain this strange occurrence. The reply came that two sins were responsible for it; firstly, he bragged of exclusive devotion for Us, and yet craved to meet you: and secondly he did not ask Us for it but requested you to bring him some water. Had he asked for it from Us, could We not have made rivers flow for him. He lacked faith.

ASK NOT THE BOON OF LOVE

A DEVOTEE underwent great penance. Pleased with his devotions, the Lord permitted him to ask for a boon, and on his further request granted him a week's time to decide. He approached a great saint and inquired of him, as to what he should ask from the Lord. The saint directed him to another Dervish. Reaching the Dervish he found him working as a labourer, supplying fuel into the oven of a baker. Although

surprised at all that he saw, yet he told the Dervish the purpose of his visit. The Dervish told him to come the next day, when he will get the answer."

The devotee approached the place where he had last found the Dervish on the following day. Instead of the Dervish, he found a great hue and cry round his mutilated body lying on the ground with the head missing. On closer examination he noticed it was the body of the Dervish. From one of the bystanders he inquired the reason for this strange scene; and learnt that the Dervish was accused of murder and was lynched to death by an infuriated mob, who severed his head, which was lying on a mound of rubbish close by.

ASK NOT THE BOON OF LOVE

However, the devotee approached the head, reminded it of his promise of yesterday and told him to answer his query. The head said, "The scene before you is the reply to your query. The Lord loved me all my life, and you know what that meant. I never received even the barest garments to cover myself, nor had a shelter against the inclemencies of weather, nor a full meal even, and worked in the hot months at an oven. Thus I passed my days when alive. On my death, not to say anything of useless coffin or a bath, even a tomb is denied to me. No prayers mark my exequit. Take lesson therefore from the life of His lover. Ask for everything—health, wealth and prosperity; but beware of asking for the gift of His

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

Love; or be prepared for the end you see before you."

M I R A . I N S T R U C T S G O S W A M I

IN the course of her wanderings, when Mira Bai arrived in Brindaban, she sought an interview with Jiva Gosain, the reputed saint of his time, and a great Vaishnavite. The Gosain, while recognising the merits of Mira, refused her the interview, on the ground that the holy scriptures did not permit him to cast a glance on any woman. Mira smiled in reply and said, “ I thought that Girdhar was the only “ Purusha ” (the

husband) in Brindaban, and everybody (the souls) was a woman (the bride of the Lord). It has dawned upon me only today that He has a compeer also (a second Krishna). The sting cut the Swami to the quick. The scales fell off his eyes. He realised, he had been vain and proud. At once he paid homage to Mira, took her to the temple, apologised to her and accepted her as his disciple.

G U R U N A N A K A T M E C C A

•

NANAK is reported to have once visited Mecca. When he reached the holy shrine, he felt very tired and weary and lay down to sleep. This aroused the indignation of the priests and the other Moslem devotees who came there. Seeing the feet of Nanak towards Kaaba, they kicked him and said, "Infidel, dare you thus insult this place? Sinner, dare you turn your feet towards the Lord's place?"

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

Guru Nanak replied: "Do not get angry. If you can do it, please turn these feet in the direction, in which He does not exist."

R A B I A A N D T H E Y O U T H

•

RABIA of Basra, was seated in front of her cottage, with a smile softly playing on her lips. Her broken jug, and tattered mattress lay in the corner. They were her only outfit.

A youngman came the way Rabia sat. But for a bandage on his head, he seemed to be quite robust and healthy.

Rabia: What is this bandage for?

Youngman: I am suffering from headache.

Rabia: What is your age?

Youngman: Thirty.

•Rabia: And how do you keep your health?

Youngman: I keep very good health. It is after a year that I suffer from this minor malady—headache.

Rabia (with tears in her eyes): What emblem did you carry all the time you were well to show to the world the goodness of God, Who had all along kept you well? Today only for a little headache, you are going about with a bandage to show to the inquisitive world that my Beloved is harsh to you. Pray remove the bandage. Let not people ask you the reason and then accuse my Lord of unkindness. Such love Rabia had for her Lord.

JAIDEVA AND GITA GOVINDA

JAIDEVA, the great mystic poet of Bengal, was composing his celebrated work, the *Gita Govinda*, when he came across the incident where Radhika, the consort of Krishna, was pouting, because Krishna had followed other milkmaids. The poet made Krishna address his consort with a view to appease her wrath and make amends for his waywardness in the following lines:
“Adorn my head by placing thy lotus feet

on it, for that shall serve as antidote for the poison injected by the shaft of cupid."

A thought occurred to Jaideva, was it not dishonouring the Lord to request a woman, howsoever faithful, to place her feet on her husband's head? As he could not think how to alter the lines, which would conform with due decorum and etiquette, he laid the pen aside and went out to take his bath. When he came back, he found to his astonishment, the line completed exactly as he had desired it.

Jaideva asked his wife, who had done it? She replied, it was he himself, and reminded him that the sooner he had left for his bath, he returned from the middle of the path,

JAIDEVA AND GITA GOVINDA

and completed the line. Jaideva said,
I never returned.

The enlightenment came to the devotee. It
was the Lord, who Himself did it.

MOTHER, I OFFER THEE BEWITCHING EYES

AN anchorite was exquisitely handsome. In the course of his wanderings, once he called in a village for alms. A lady from a house came out and gave him some food. However, on seeing his beauty she fell in love with his eyes. The next day when the Dervish again called in the same village, the same lady again came and gave him alms. On the third day he did not come to that village. When he again came there on the

MOTHER, I OFFER THEE BEWITCHING EYES

fourth day, the same lady came out and complained of his absence of yesterday telling him that she was kept waiting all the time. The Dervish was surprised at her concern for him, inquired of her the reason for it. He was shocked to hear that she had fallen in love with his eyes.

With a bandage tied to his eyes and carrying a little bag in his hands he found his way to the lady's place with the help of his stick. The lady was already waiting for him. When he came to her, she inquired what was the matter with his eyes. He handed over the little bag to the lady, saying, "Mother, here are the eyes you liked so much. Pray keep them with you. I have no use of them. Remember, I could do nothing otherwise.

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

In the path of the devotee, every attachment
is forbidden but for the Lord.”

PURSUING THE SMOULDERING BONES

INTENT on returning to the most capable prince in the house of the last king whose kingdom he had conquered in Iran, Alexander the Great inquired of the people, where he dwelt. They pointed to a cemetery outside the town, as his place of residence, as he was extremely disgusted with regal grandeur.

Alexander went to him, reprimanded him for taking his abode in a burial ground, and

tried to persuade him to assume the reins of Government. He answered, "O king, I am in the midst of my search, from which until I am disengaged, I cannot take up any responsible work." Alexander said, "Does this pursuit of yours consist in turning over the smouldering bones? If not, then what else can it be?" The youth replied, "The reality of the transitory and illusory nature of the world having dawned on me, I voluntarily withdrew from society and made my abode in this burial ground: I have since long been turning over these skulls, endeavouring to distinguish that of the powerful rulers from those of humble worshippers. Uptill now I have not been able to distinguish them and am yet uncertain."

PURSUING THE SMOULDERING BONES

O, mighty ruler, if thou can help me in the solution of this riddle, I shall obey thy behest." Alexander replied, "This is a mighty pursuit and the knowledge of the Almighty alone can solve this riddle. But thou hast yet energy. It behoves thy rank. Come, don the crown and rule thy people." The prince answered, "I am yet young and have energy which aspires for higher pursuits, to unravel the mystery of death and discover that eternal youth which no age, power, and grief can lessen. Bestow it, if you can." Alexander replied, "From me, you cannot expect such objects." The prince said, "Farewell then, O king, let me now seek it from One Who can bestow it on me, a mightier Ruler than thee."

I AM BURNT: I AM CONSUMED—CRIED RABIA

ONE night Rabia of Basra, completely forgot herself in her devotions, and was lost in divine consciousness. In her abnormal condition she cried out: "I am burnt: I am consumed." When the people heard the cry, they rushed to the house of Rabia. A devotee who heard Rabia as he passed that way, said to the people, "Do not be foolish, ignorant people. The fire that is consuming Rabia is not of this world. She

I AM BURNT: I AM CONSUMED—CRIED RABIA

is burning in the fire of separation for her Beloved Lord. She had all along been suppressing her feelings, and avoiding a display thereof. Now she could hold no longer: and she blurted out those words. Go back to your houses. This fire shall be extinguished, only when she meets her Beloved Lord.”

M Y M O T H E R B L E S S E D M E

BA YAZID of Bistam was once questioned by the people, "How could you attain to such a high degree of spirituality?" "Through the blessings of my mother," replied he. Next they asked him, "How did it come about?" He said, "Once in winter, it was an extremely cold night. At mid-night my mother asked me for some water. I took it to her in an earthen tumbler. She lay asleep. I stood by her

MY MOTHER BLESSED ME

side, not disturbing her. When she woke after some hours, she found me standing with the water. She took it. Some skin of mine got attached to the earthen tumbler, it being extremely cold. She was touched at the sight and marvelled at my obedience. Taking me in her laps, she kissed me and blessed me. God heard her prayers on my behalf, accepted them and showered His blessings on me.”

W H O I S A T R U E L O V E R?

MUINUDDIN Sanjiri was seated in the company of some devotees, who were discussing the attributes of a true lover. Sanjiri defined a true lover as one who welcomes troubles, and accepts them with joy coming from his Lord. Sheikh Shahabuddin Saharvardi said, he is a genuine lover who is so absorbed in divine consciousness that he does not feel even if a hundred swords were to fall on his head. Khwaja Azal

Shirazi said that he is a true lover, who when absorbed in devotion is so lost that he would not utter a sigh, much less a shriek, if he were to be torn to pieces and fire were to be lighted on his head. Sheikh Saifuddin Bakharzi said that he is a genuine friend of the Lord, who even in the midst of tribulations, would not withdraw himself from witnessing the divine vision, and would be oblivious to his troubles.

Sheikh Shahabuddin then said, he had read in the book, Asar-ul-Aulia, that once Rabia Basri, Hasan Basri, Malik Dinar and Khwaja Shafiq Balkhi were all seated together, holding a discourse on this very subject. Khwaja Hasan Basri said, he is truly in love with God, who, if he were to be subjected to pain

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

and suffering, would bear it patiently, without uttering a word of complaint. Rabia said that this definition smelt of egotism. Malik Dinar improved on it saying that he is a lover, who, if pain and trouble come from the Friend, will accept it with joy as a boon. Rabia, replying said, a lover ranks higher than what you have said. 'He is a lover who is so steeped in His love, that he has lost the faculty that distinguishes pain from pleasure. Everything he welcomes as if coming from the Friend.

S T O N E T H E H E R E T I C

SHIBLI once narrated the following incident to his disciples:—

“ I was once passing through the city, when I came across some children, throwing stones at a Dervish. As a result his head was broken, and blood was issuing from his body. Seeing this, I rebuked the children for their brutal treatment of the poor man. They, however, remonstrated and said, “ Please, sir, do not fall in our way. We shall not leave

this man without pelting him to death. This fellow, sir, is a heretic." I asked them, "How could you know it?" "Well, sir," they replied, "this fellow imagines that he is one with God, and pretends to be holding conversation with Him constantly." I, however, stopped them for a moment.

Approaching the Dervish, I found the mad fellow, busy talking to himself and overheard him saying, "You have done well in setting these children after me, so that they might trouble me." I asked him, "Do you hear what these children say about you?" The fellow got out of his reverie and said, "Shibli, what brings you here and what do you say?" I tell you that "in your vanity you imagine that you are seeing God and

conversing with Him." The instant he heard my words, he shrieked and was lost in ecstasy. On recovering he said, "I say by God, the same God, who has thus involved me in His love, that He has drawn me in so close proximity to Him, has yet placed heavy veils in between. I tell you if He were to draw Himself away from me, for a moment, this heart shall break into pieces, in sheer agony of separation." Reciting the lines following he ran way, leaving me pondering on them:

" You dwell in my eyes, Your name is on my lips, and Your place is in my heart.
Where have You then hid Yourself (that I discover You not?) "

DOWN WITH THE MOUND OF EGO

A BUL Hasan Sushma narrated:

“ Once I was standing in the company of devotees, who were surrounding Sheikh Abu Bakr Shibli as he stood in prayers in the Jumma Masjid. A person appeared before the Sheikh, putting on the dress of a teacher, and addressing Shibli said, “ O Sheikh, tell me what is union with God.” Shibli turned towards him and answered, “ Ye questioner after the truth of unity, give up two kinds of

DOWN WITH THE MOUND OF EGO

attachments and you shall attain to Him the moment you have done that." He inquired, "What are those two attachments?" Shibli answered, "They are the mounds that obstruct you from reaching Him." "And what are they?" he queried. Shibli answered, "This world and the next." The Lord Himself says, "some amongst you crave for this world and others for happiness in the next. Who is there amongst you, who is above these and craves for God alone?" Following this Shibli fell into an ecstatic mood, and while in that mood began to utter the words: "When you call Him God, He is God. When you become silent, He is still God. O my God, O my God, and You who art that. And except Yourself none knows

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

another (God) and yet does not know You. You are blessed. You are blessed. You are all alone and without a compeer."

These words were full of love and remembrance of the Lord. Unable to bear their warmth, he could proceed no further; completely lost himself and fell down unconscious. With difficulty Shibli could be carried home.

S E E K R E F U G E I N H I M

THERE lived a keen devotee of the Lord, who served the Dervishes and spent the major portion of his life in search of God. But all his efforts were of no avail. Disappointed by this wandering, he sat under a tree, determined not to leave the place till God had vouchsafed His vision to him. He said to himself that he would ask for His light from Him directly and not indirectly through an intermediary.

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

Hazrat Junaid once passed the way where this devotee sat, and got down from his pony to meet the man. As he approached him, Junaid discovered, he sat in contemplation and was experiencing certain obstacles in a particular stage of the Path. Junaid, by his powers helped him out of the difficulty. Delighted the devotee opened his eyes and thanked Junaid for the help. Junaid felt flattered and told the devotee that he can always approach him, whenever in future he finds himself in difficulty. The devotee replied, "Thank you for the offer, but I regret I am unable to accept it. Do you not see, is it you who have come to me, or did I go to you. I am seated at a door which shall always find a way to solve my difficulty.

S E E K R E F U G E I N H I M

Leaving His door, why should I depend on
your offer."

Junaid marvelled at his faith and blessed
him.

SADAN, THE BUTCHER SAINT

SADAN, the butcher saint, was a great devotee of Saligram. With that he used to measure out meat to everybody. One day a Brahman devotee of Saligram, approached Sadan, rebuked him for defiling the idol, which he took away from him.

In the night the Brahman had a vision. The God Saligram appeared to him in the dream, reprimanded him for having deprived his true devotee Sadan of Himself, and told him

to go and return it to him, for He liked Sadan to use Him for any purpose he wanted. The next day the Brahman returned the idol to Sadan, and told him that God would not accept his worship as he snatched it away from him. Sadan became possessed of devotion and love for his Lord, gave up his profession and thenceforward spent all his time in the service of the deity—Saligram. This, the relations of Sadan did not like. He therefore abandoned his house. His relations however followed him. To avoid them, he took shelter in a house in the village in the neighbourhood.

The wife of the villager took fancy to Sadan, and made advances to him. These Sadan always repulsed. Misreading these repulses

offered by Sadan, for fear for the husband of the lady who might discover the illicit liaison, she decided to remove that obstacle. One night in the heat of her passion, she murdered her husband, and carrying the severed head of the dead man, she approached Sadan, telling him to enjoy her, now that there was no fear left. Sadan admonished her for her unholy act. To save her life, in sheer despair, the lady laid the false charge, that Sadan had killed her husband, as the latter was offended on seeing the infatuation of Sadan for his wife. This theory of 'improper overtures' appealed to the villagers. Sadan was taken to the judge, before whom, to the surprise of all, he confessed his guilt. People did not however;

SADAN, THE BUTCHER SAINT

I know that Sadan did it to save the life of the lady, he himself was innocent. The judge ordered the executioner to cut off Sadan's hands; which was done.

With mutilated arms Sadan proceeded in his wanderings. His devotions proved efficacious and the Lord blessed him with new hands and released him from the pain of rebirths.

K A B I R ' S R E P A R T E E

ONE day Kabir was working on his warp. Somebody asked him, "What is it that you have engaged yourself in?" He replied, "In breaking at this end and joining at the other." Next they asked, "What is it that I see on your head?" He answered, "Death."

FARIDUDDIN ATTAR TURNS A SUFI

FARIDUDDIN Attar, the great mystic poet of Persia, was a chemist by profession, before he gave up everything and proceeded in search of God. How this sudden change came about is thus recorded in the history of the Persian literature.

One day a Dervish approached him, while Attar was busy attending to his patients: and asked for alms. Attar feigned not to hear him. The Dervish repeated his request

thrice, but to no purpose. In utter disgust, he shouted, "Attar, I am surprised at your business. I wonder how will you die."

Attar retorted, "Just, as you will die."

The Dervish addressed Attar, "Do you really mean it?" "Yes," replied Attar.

Laying himself on the ground, the Faqir loudly uttered, "God be praised"—and a corpse was left.

Attar understood the challenge. He took it up, abandoned his shop, donned the coarse garments and with the begging bowl started on his divine mission.

THE WIFE AS THE TEACHER

TULSI DAS, the author of the Hindi edition of the Ramayan, was married to the beautiful daughter of Dinbandhu Pathak. He loved her passionately and could not tolerate her separation for a moment. Once her parents called her home to attend certain ceremonies. Tulsi Das, however unwillingly, permitted her to go. Soon he experienced the bitter pangs of separation, and started to meet his wife at

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

his father-in-law's; looking like a maniac, infatuated and wildly eloquent in his facial expressions.

The wife, on seeing her husband felt extremely ashamed at his acts and rebuked him in the lines following:

“Feeleth thou not the shame, thus running
you come following me.

Accursed be such passion, O my Lord.

For this mortal skin thou feeleth such
affection.

Could thou transfer this love to Ram, no
agony shall ever come to thee.”

Goswami Tulsi Das saw the truth behind the words. The enlightenment dawned on him. The world knows what followed next.

SERVE THY MASTER WITH THY EYES

BABA Farid Shakar Ganj went to Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti to receive his initiation from that great Teacher. When Farid reached Ajmer, where Chisti dwelt, he found the tree against which the Khwaja was reclining, completely dried and withered. Baba Farid felt surprised and thought that it was queer that the tree against which such a great Saint should recline should remain dead. He, thereupon, looked in ecstasy at

the tree, and instantly it turned green. The Khwaja observed it; himself cast a glance at the tree, which again was withered. Excited at it, Farid cast a second glance at the tree and it revived. The Khwaja repeated his old process and again it was withered. Addressing himself to Farid, Khwaja said, "Have you come to learn humility in the Path and be initiated in the mysteries, or to quarrel with the Scheme of Nature? It is the divine will that this tree should remain withered. Why should you then interfere with that wise arrangement and try to give it life? Go to Kutub Sahib at Delhi and he will initiate you according to your competency and merit." Farid left the Khwaja and proceeded to Delhi.

The moment Farid reached Delhi, he found Kutubuddin, a mere youngster, playing with other children. He scoffed and thought to himself how could this mere boy teach me anything? As if by a flash in his mind, Kutubuddin read the thoughts of Baba Farid, left the play, went inside his cell, and came out an old man with a flowing white beard. Approaching Farid he asked, "Am I now old enough to be your teacher?"

Farid repented on his hasty conclusion and stayed with Kutubuddin, and turned his disciple.

The daily practice of Farid was to serve his master with water for his daily ablutions. One night Kutub Sahib asked Farid to make

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

the fire and bring some hot water. As no fire was available in the place, he went in search of it in the neighbourhood, and found it at an old woman's. She would not give it unless Farid agreed to part with his beautiful eyes in return for it. Farid agreed and taking out his eyes gave them to the lady. Bandaging his eyes, he prepared some hot water and served his master with it, but did not speak a word about what had happened to him.

In the morning Kutub Sahib asked Farid what was the trouble with his eyes? He replied they were aching. Replied Kutub, "The pain is welcome, may it lead to an improvement on the former." Farid found on removing the bandage, that the eyes had

SERVE THY MASTER WITH THY EYES

become alright, more improved and enlarged.
Farid thanked his master.

O M Y L O R D, O M Y S W E E T L A M B

A PRIEST, passing the hut of a poor shepherd, overheard his lamentation, as he was addressing his Lord through tears, “ Beloved, show Thyself to me. Come to me. I pray. I shall give You nice green grass to eat. I shall purchase a new bell for You. I shall dye Your hair and trim them beautifully. Come, O my dear Lamb, I shall embrace You and cheer You up.”

The priest entered the cottage, remonstrated

O MY LORD, O MY SWEET LAMB

with the man, “What business have you to defile the holy person of the Lord? Do you consider the Lord is a brute, one of thine herd? Beware of such lamentations and paroxysms in future.” The poor man was very sad and gloomy, repented on his mistake, and said he shall never commit it again.

In a dream, the Lord appeared to the priest, and rebuked him for having deprived Him of a true devotee’s devotions. What business have you to interfere if I desire to be loved like a lamb? Beware, O priest, of false pretensions. The heart counts and not the apparent acts—the ceremonials and the performance of rituals.

K A M A L H E A L S T H E L E P E R

ALEPER disgusted with his miserable life, decided to make an end of it. Although he was very rich, yet his disease had made him extremely unhappy. He therefore went to the Ganges to drown himself. Kamal, the son of Kabir, saw that the man was bent on destroying himself. He approached him and begged of him to desist from such an unholy act, promising to cure him of his malady. The man desisted.

K A M A L H E A L S T H E L E P E R

Kamal thereupon took a handful of water, repeated the name of God thrice and sprinkled it on the unhappy man. And lo, he was cured. The leper was greatly delighted and bestowed on Kamal costly presents.

When Kabir heard of the wealth Kamal had brought home, he was much displeased. He upbraided Kamal for selling the name of God for the wealth of the world. The following couplet is ascribed to Kabir on the occasion :

“ By the birth of a son like Kamal, the family of Kabir is ruined.

Ceases to repeat the name of Lord, he brings home riches of the world.”

HERETIC OR THE BELIEVER

“**D**O you make any distinction between the heretic and the believer?” Baqar Ali Shah once questioned the Sufi Dervish Kambal Posh.

Kambal Posh answered, “Not in the least. Both are rays of the same divine effulgence, related to each other as light is to shadow.” Next Baqar Ali asked him, “What Path do you follow?”

Kambal Posh replied, “None. In winter

HERETIC OR THE BELIEVER

“I like the Sun, and the shade comforts me in summer; in the day light delights me, and darkness pleases me in the night.”

Addressing Ghous Ali Shah, Baqar Ali inquired of him what religion did he follow? Ghous Ali said, “To all external appearances I am a Moslem. Of the working of my heart I do not know, whether the devil dwells there or it pays homage to my dear Lord.”

SPIRITUALITY ONCE ACHIEVED, NEVER LOST

GHOUSS Ali Shah said, "Amongst millions it is a single fortunate one, who is a genuine Dervish and achieves realisation. And once that invaluable gift is obtained, in no way can it be lost. Ghous Bahlol Haq Zakaria of Multan was sitting in the second storey of his house, when he heard a great hue and cry and learnt that somebody was drowned. He got into a trance and with his miraculous powers brought him out. A

SPIRITUALITY ONCE ACHIEVED NEVER LOST

Dervish who was passing that way witnessed this display of vanity on the part of Zakaria and told him, "It is child's performance that you performed. The Path of devotion does not lie this way. It is different." Zakaria came downstairs and inquired about the knowledge the Fakir claimed to impart. The Dervish replied, "Devotion is that boon that which when acquired, the possessor of it may with impunity indulge in unholy acts, and in crimes but it would not be lost." Zakaria was silent. He left the Dervish, determined to test him, and find if he was true to his teachings.

The next day, Zakaria prepared a little dog's meat, purchased some wine, and calling a beautiful young prostitute, sent her to the

Dervish along with the meat and drink. The Dervish partook of everything.

When the lady narrated what passed at the hut of the Dervish, Zakaria got into temper and riding a pony started to chastise him for his misdeeds. As he was crossing the rivulet that lay between the hut of the Dervish and the town, his horse stopped to vacate itself. The Dervish was watching the whole affair from the opposite side, shouted, "Beware Zakaria, let not the horse pollute the running water of the stream." Zakaria smiled and said, "O Dervish perhaps you do not know even the things of this world. Is it possible that the excreta and urine of the horse can make the flowing waters of the river dirty and unholy?" The Dervish

SPIRITUALITY ONCE ACHIEVED NEVER LOST

found the occasion was ripe to strike the correct note, retorted, "Zakaria, you are a queer devotee, while you hold that the water of this stream cannot be spoilt by the urine and excreta of the pony, I cannot understand how you contend that the perennial and boundless Ocean of Divinity can be corrupted by drinking a cup of wine, by a bite at dog's meat or an embrace with a public woman?"

Remember for all times, miracle-performing is not the *summum bonum* of life and true knowledge. Truth and knowledge is made of sterner and unchanging stuff:

"Knowledge is Truth; and Truth is separate from it.

Knowledge is independent of God even."

T H E D E S P I S E D S K U L L

ONCE Shibli was passing through the ruins of an old city. He came across a skull on the frontal bone of which were prominently inscribed the words--“Condemned in this world and the next.” Whosoever passed that way read these words and in sheer disgust kicked it.

Shibli heard one say, “He must have been a very immoral person, who bears on his forehead even after his death the marks of

condemnation.” He, however, took it up with great affection, kissed it with reverence, pressed it to his bosom and shed tears of love. A bystander amazed at this strange act of the prominent Sufi, asked him why did he honour such a disreputable person? Shibli replied this head seems to be of some great devotee, for he is the greatest devotee who reaches the stage of “condemned in this world and the next,” and merges himself in the Lord. You must have heard, Shibli added, the tradition, which says, “My devotee is condemned in both the worlds.” The fact is that His ways are queer. He will appreciate this condition who has loved: “The taste of the nectar of love is not for everybody.

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST

The food of one may be poison for another.
For enshrining the secret of Love, every
closet of heart is not suited.

Just as every ocean does not carry pearls,
nor all mines contain veins of gold."

THE MEMORABLE MEETING

ONE day the great mystic saint, Shamsh Tabraiz, prayed to the Lord to give him a dear friend of His, who shall be his companion, to whom he shall recite the tale of love, and who shal' share the agonies of divine separation and meeting. The Lord asked for the price. Shamsh immediately offered his head.

Shamsh was led to Quniya, where dwelt Maulana Rum, who was a renowned

TALES FROM THE MYSTICS OF THE EAST.

professor of Philosophy at the time, however, unacquainted with practical mysticism. He was seated on the bank of a tank, pondering over certain manuscripts when Shamsh accosted him and inquired what was he engaged in? The professor replied he was solving some divine mysteries: and added that the problems were too difficult for his comprehension. Shamsh smiled and taking hold of those manuscripts threw them in the tank, telling him that divine knowledge did not lie in books. Maulana Rum was taken aback, was much aggrieved, and sadly observed, "O Dervish, you do not know what a loss you have caused to the world by destroying these manuscripts." Shamsh smiled. Putting his hands once more in the

THE MEMORABLE MEETING

water, he brought them out, all in their original condition remarking, "Do not break your heart on these toys." The Maulana took up the hint, sought his initiation from the Dervish. The world knows what happened next. The teacher got the disciple, and the disciple found the teacher. A rich legacy was left to posterity.

Y E K N O W E T H M Y H E A R T

ONCE people asked Junaid ,Baghdadi, “ Why do you not ask for the boon of divine vision? It is possible, if you make the request, the Lord will grant it.” He replied, “ I do not make any request. Moses asked for it, and he was denied it. The Prophet was, however, blessed with it without the asking for it. The devotee has no place in his heart left for cherishing any desire. When the time is ripe, He will

Himself remove the veils and the Divine Face will be revealed. There is therefore no need for making a request."

The conversation next turned on Divine Love. Hazrat Junaid said, "The heart of the lover is the oven of love. Whatever falls into it is consumed, turned to ashes and lost for ever, for no fire is intenser than the fire of love."

"It is narrated of Ba Yazid Bistami, that when he reached in close proximity of the Lord, he heard the Hidden Voice say, 'Ask for a boon from Us today and We shall grant it.' Ba Yazid let his head fall in humility and said, "No room is left in me to make a request. The whole place is filled with Thee. Whatever Thou confers is Thy blessing and Thy gift. I am content with whatever Thou

bestowest of Thy accord." The voice repeated, " We bestow on thee, this world and the next, the highest and the lowest regions and that which is contained in between." " I have respect for your blessings, O Lord," replied Ba Yazid. " You are acquainted with my mind already." " Ba Yazid," came the answer, " You are asking Us from Us. What, if We were to ask you from you?" Ba Yazid shrieked and said, " O Lord Beneficent, believe me, if You will summon me on the day of judgment, and make me stand in the Hell-fire, I shall present myself there too and my sigh shall be cold enough to quench the Hell-fire: for this I know before the fire of thy love, the Hell-fire is merely burnt-out cinders."

Y E K N O W E T H M Y H E A R T

Ba Yazid heard the voice say, " Seek and We promise, you shall find Us."

THE KISS OF THE CANDLE

MAULANA RUMI once narrated the following incident to his disciples:

“Once a certain Dervish started on a long pilgrimage to pay his respects to a renowned devotee. After the hardships of the journey, when he reached the threshold of the hut of the devotee, he heard a voice issue forth from the hut, “Return now, O Dervish, your object is gained. This is sufficient for you. You shall not be able to bear with your eyes,

THE KISS OF THE CANDLE

My presence. Harm shall ensue to you, if you insist on looking at Me.”

Maulana commented on this and said, “A little useful talk is like the lighted candle. It kisses a dead candle and revives it. It does not associate longer. The kiss is sufficient. It is beneficial. The ambition of the dead one is fulfilled.

It is unlike the oven, which destroys the clay vessels, if the temperature rises a little. The oven does not permit every body to approach it. Harm might ensue. With the candle, however, it is different, it aids vision. It makes life enjoyable.”

THE SUFI WHO NEVER TOOK MEAT

A BUL ALA MAEERA is said to have received his initiation at the hands of the Brahmans and had adopted their religion. He thereafter never partook of meat. He lived for eighty years, and during this long period, he did not touch meat for over forty-five years. It so happened once that the physician during one of his illnesses advised him to take chicken-soup. When it was brought before him, he touched it and

THE SUFI WHO NEVER TOOK MEAT

said, "Finding thee (chicken) weak people have prescribed thee for me, for how else can you account for their not prescribing the soup of the lion's cub for me?"

HE DOES NOT ACCEPT BRIBE

SHIBLI was lying on his death-bed. His friends approached him, and as is the practice of the worldlies, requested him to stop all conversation, occupy his mind with the remembrance of God, and try to recite the name of God; so that his end might be happy.

Shibli replied:

“Remember friends, the Sultan of Love does not accept bribes.”

WHERE DWELLS THE LORD?

B A YAZID of Bistam, having attained to a great degree of spirituality, in his vanity sought the Lord in the Heavens. Of the angels he enquired, "Where is God?" They replied, "We had thought He dwelt on earth, and you have come here to seek Him." Ba Yazid was dumbfounded: "The temple and the mosque are both vacant and do not contain Thee. In vain I wandered in Arab and in countries outside it, I could not find Thee."

SHAMSH TABRAIZ RAISING THE DEAD

ONCE upon a time, a king asked certain actors to stage the part of a lion in the day-time. They submitted the secret is revealed in the day, so it is not possible to stage the show. The king insisted upon it and said if there is the least difference from the reality, in the performance, the actors shall lose their lives. The poor men were very much terrified. The drummer, amongst them, was a Dervish, who gave them solace

SHAMSH TABRAIZ RAISING THE DEAD

and told them, they had to give the performance a day later, the night intervened, something might happen which might prove happy, they should not therefore lose heart.

The next day the drummer took them to the royal palace; and on reaching the appointed place, he asked them to cover him with a white sheet and then commence playing music. This was continued only for some time, when from underneath the sheet, a lion came out, and thundered. All round was silent; and those assembled shivered. The king held the prince in his laps. As the lion was taking rounds, the prince pointed to the lion and made some noise. Instantly the lion snatched the prince off the king's lap

and disappeared. The king was dumbfounded.

The show over, the king asked the Vazir how to get back his child so suddenly lost to him? The minister was a shrewd man. He scented that there must have been some saint in the company of these actors who had performed this miracle. He requested the king to order the actors to stage the miracle “Raising the Dead;” oftener performed, tradition has it, by Christ. The actors were informed of the king’s orders to give this performance. The drummer again came to rescue. He told his friends that there was one who could do that even. He was Shamsh Tabraiz, who dwelt not far away.

Singing sweet songs, they approached the

great saint, Shamsh Tabraiz, who had great weakness for music and so touched•was he by those songs, that he followed them to the king's presence, where the dead body of the child lay. They requested !Shamsh to perform the miracle of Christ, that of raising the dead to life. Shamsh, approaching the dead child, said, "Awake, in the name of the Lord." The corpse did not move a bit. He repeated his orders again, but without any effect. Shamsh was irritated, kicked the child and shouted, "Get up, by my orders." Instantly the child revived.

